

## King Caesar needs the Midas touch

### Historical society launches capital campaign

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DUXBURY — The entrance to the King Caesar House is a door that leads to another time, a time when shipbuilders were the Bill Gateses of the country.

Ezra Weston II was a wealthy shipbuilder, enjoying the luxuries of his day from the many ports his ships sailed into.

His house had furnishings from Europe, French wallpaper and other fine items from throughout the world.

Stepping into the house, one quickly is whisked back to the 1800s, when the building was originally constructed. The fireplaces are no longer roaring with flames to keep the house warm during cool nights, but the artifacts on display are genuine from that time, said Patrick Browne of the Rural and Historical Society.

Artifacts such as ship building tools and captain's logs written by Weston are displayed throughout the house.

The wallpaper in two of the rooms was painted and shipped from France and tell the story of a time long ago, and life along the water.

According to Browne, Weston was given the nickname "King Caesar" because acquaintances said "he was as rich as King Caesar himself."

It was not meant as a compliment, but Weston took to the name, even using it in referring to himself.

He helped make his business, E. Weston and Son, the largest shipping company on the South Shore.

He could see his shipyard from his stone wharf, located just yards from the front door to his magnificent home along Blue Fish River.

The sole stone wharf still standing in Duxbury is slowly deteriorating

by tides and erosion. Dirt is being sucked out from the cracks in the wall by the tide and several stones have fallen to the shoreline.

If it is not restored, this link to the town's past could wash out to sea.

The Duxbury Historical Society was established by the town in 1965 to protect and preserve the historical artifacts and buildings that have become everyday sights to residents.

The "mountain of maintenance" needed to restore the building and other historical sites along town have piled up, said Browne. The time has come to repair the roof, the drainage just outside the kitchen, and to protect the foundation of the house.

The town voted at the special town meeting on June 17 to appropriate \$86,000 for restoration work on the King Caesar House. The so-

cietly is "thrilled the town is supportive," said Browne.

There is much more needed, however, to preserve the historic buildings of the town, said Browne. In order to avoid further maintenance becoming piled up over time, the society is trying to raise \$1 million for an endowment fund, along with the current restoration needs of \$365,000. The fundraising campaign depends on contributions from the public.

The three buildings that will benefit from the campaign are the King Caesar House, the Nathaniel Winsor Jr. House and the Captain Bradford House.

The museum in the King Caesar house has undergone a slight facelift itself. New exhibits are on display, with photographs of the ships that helped begin trading in the country. A replica of the captain's quarters gives the viewer the chance to see what life was like on the ship.

Over the years, Browne said, many residents have enjoyed the King Caesar House, along with other historical buildings, for their educational value; others have come to peek through a keyhole to the country's past.

Whatever reasons draw people here, Browne said the historical society is working hard to keep this page of history open for years to come.



File photo

**Fixer upper?** — The Duxbury Historical Society is trying to raise \$1 million for an endowment fund, along with \$365,000 for current restoration needs for the King Caesar House.